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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; US POLICY ON LATIN AMERICA; DOHA ROUND;
01/04/08

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's international opinion pieces are related to the US policy on Latin America; and expectations over the Doha Round.

2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "US policy on Latin America"

Business-financial "Buenos Aires Economico" (01/04) front-pages an opinion piece by prestigious economist and historian Mario Rapoport, who writes "The current tension in the US-Argentine bilateral relationship as a result of the Antonini Wilson affair... is not merely a legal issue.

"Washington has long disliked Chavez's presence in the hemisphere and increasing ties between Caracas and Buenos Aires. Last but not least, it also does not like the regional moves aimed at obtaining the autonomy of the Southern section of the region... through the consolidation of Mercosur, rejection of the FTAA by several countries, or the creation of their own financial institutions, like Banco del Sur...

"... US policies on Latin America have been a failure and the governments of the region are determined to seek their own road even when others, like Uribe, are still loyal to the US. In spite of Argentina and Venezuela's failed humanitarian intervention attempt, Latin America's economic, political and security agenda should be decided by the nations of the region. This is the best way of dealing with the US and put an end to its long-standing policy of 'containment' of Latin American interests."

- "The 2008 Doha Round"

Business-financial "El Cronista" (01/04) carries an opinion piece by Marcelo Halperin, from the Latin American Integration Institute at National University of La Plata, who writes "The negotiating methodology used during the latest WTO Rounds is being taken to the extreme of sophistication at the (current) Doha Round. Its complexity is due to a concern that is being shared by all country-members - downplay whatever they will sign. In this way, on the one hand, delegations discuss concessions or 'progress' and, on the other hand, they discuss how to efficiently downplay or neutralize them through limitations or exceptions.

"The G20 has already expressed its disappointment with the way negotiations are carried out. Obviously enough, no fruitful deals will be achieved... although perhaps this is the price to be paid in order to close the (Doha) Round - a result with neither big winners nor losers.

"In brief, statements seem to open, not close, the doors for a deal

because the implementation of the disciplines proposed by developing countries would not significantly affect developed countries. Meanwhile, some developing countries relying on their agricultural exports could renegotiate their market access with other developing countries through last-generation FTAs. While some important tasks will remain pending, there is consensus on the need to close this Round at any expense with the purpose of preserving the multilateral forum as the last-instance environment to set limits on trade practices of protection, discrimination and depredation."

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